

REMARKS

The Official Action of June 19, 2003 has been carefully considered and reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

The recitations formerly in claim 1 have been incorporated into claim 8, and claim 1 has been canceled. New claims 29-33 have been added with the recitations formerly in claims 2-6 and the latter claims have been canceled. The amendments to these claims remove the bases for the rejections under 35 USC 102(b) appearing at paragraphs 3 and 4 of the Official Action since these rejections were not applied against the recitations of claim 8.

Certain claims were also rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Kubota et al and other claims were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Kubota et al in view of the secondary references cited at paragraphs 7 and 8 of the Official Action. Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

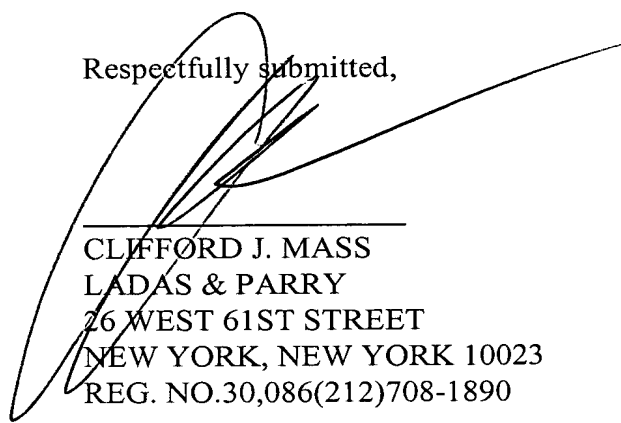
The Examiner has cited the Kubota et al reference under the provisions of 35 USC 102(b), but Applicants respectfully note that this reference has a publication date of April 10, 2003, which is **after** the filing date of the present application.

Accordingly, the reference is not citable against the claims of this application under the provisions of 35 USC 102(b) or 35 USC 102(b)/103. Moreover, although the

reference was not cited under the provisions of 35 USC 102(e), it is respectfully noted that the Kubota et al application is a continuing application that originated with an international application filed prior to November 29, 2000. As discussed in MPEP Section 706.02(a), no international filing date prior to November 29, 2000 may be relied upon as a prior art date under 35 USC 102(e) (see, also, Example 9 of MPEP Section 706.02(f)(1)).

In view of the above, Applicants respectfully submit that all rejections and objections of record have been overcome. An early and favorable reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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